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SUBJECT: BANGLADESH ISLAMI UNIVERSITY

REF: DHAKA 6275

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Poloff visited Bangladesh Islami University, a new Bangladesh private university with Saudi Arabian connections. Secretary General Maulana Jafri discussed his university's expansion plans, asked for U.S. assistance, and denied any plans to run for office. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On August 14, Maulana Kamaluddin Jafri invited poloff to visit Bangladesh Islami University (BIU), an English medium university, describing it as the newest of the 54 private universities in Bangladesh. Conceived in 2002, he said, BIU is nearing completion of its first academic year with total student enrollment of 200, housed in a temporary ten-story building in central Dhaka. The building housing BIU also provides primary and secondary schooling for 100 students, which Jafri expected to attend his soon-to-grow university.

¶3. (SBU) Jafri, the school's Secretary General, said that BIU was sponsored by Bangladeshi Islami University Trust (BIUT), chaired by Dr. Abduallah Omar Naseef through a cooperative Saudi-Bangladesh arrangement. Asked who funds BIU, Jafri replied that BIU is funded solely with Bangladeshi money, but is actively seeking foreign contributions and assistance. He said that he currently has no foreign students, but expects that to change in the future.

¶4. (SBU) Current programs are limited to business studies, human affairs and social sciences, and law. Poloff saw several all male classes, conducted in English, whose participants said they came from all over Bangladesh. Some of the students in an Islamic studies course, encouraged by the professors, volunteered they were Hindu. Asked why they chose BIU, some said they expected to graduate and obtain good paying jobs with their college education.

¶5. (SBU) Poloff toured the building and saw a small lending library where required texts are available for borrowing. Asked where the computers and Internet were located, Jafri said that the faulty offices all had Internet access. He said that they plan to put a distance learning center in place, in which the Internet plays a central role. Within five years, Jafri said, he plans to expand the university to 5,000 students on a 50 acre campus, providing both male and female residential housing, and expand the faculty to provide degrees in science, engineering, medical sciences,

agriculture, and Shariah law.

¶ 6. (SBU) Jafri, seen frequently on Bangladesh television, said that his school emphasized "morality first" and prepares their students for the future where they can "do just works and be accountable to God." He and his staff told poloff that the Koran said that all Muslims who see knowledge must "pick it up." Jafri added that Islamic knowledge stretched as far as Seville and Cordoba, and that it is the duty of all Muslims "to retrieve their lost knowledge and heritage."

¶ 7. (SBU) Poloff asked the Jamaat Islami-affliated Jafri if he intends to run for a seat in the upcoming parliamentary election. Jafri said that he would not, claiming he was only an academician.

¶ 8. (SBU) Note: Jafri is principle of the sprawling Jamiya Kashemia maddrassah which we visited on in December 2005 (reftel).

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